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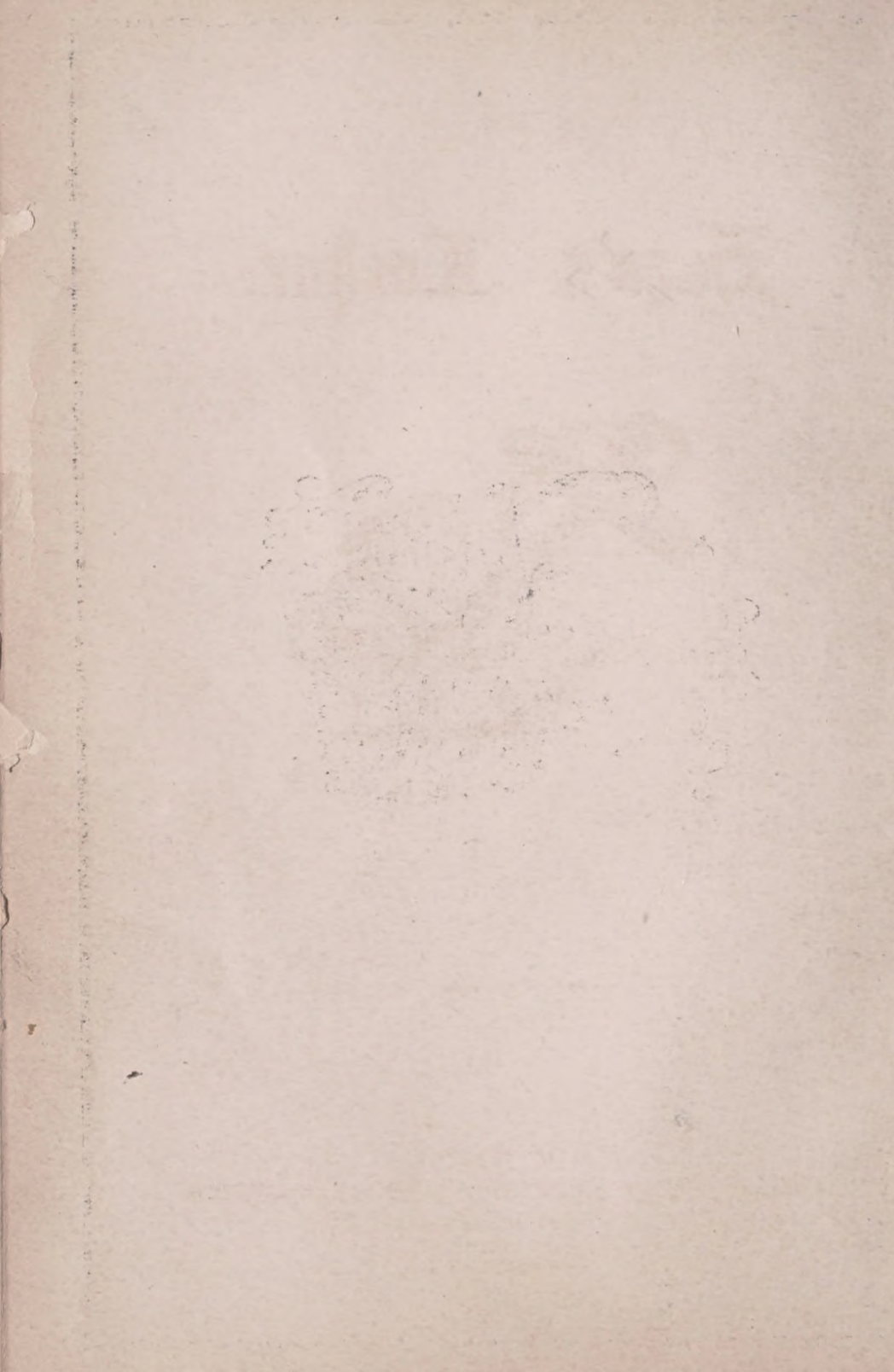
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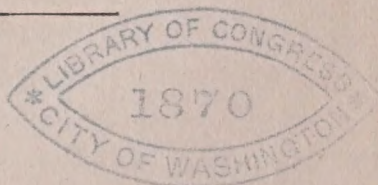
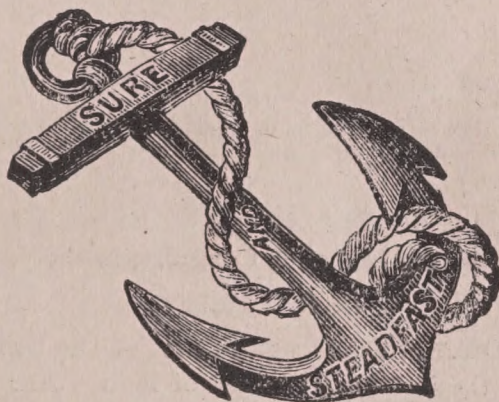






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Hope's Anchor.



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HOPE'S ANCHOR.

I.

SECONNET AND CHARLEY HOPE.

IT WAS at Seconnet Point, on the Rhode Island coast, in the summer of 186—, that I first met, in his manhood, the person who gives name to this sketch. At Seconnet, one of the most picturesque points of all the New England shore, and one that would be more frequented if there was more actual seeking for health and less for the attractive fashionable dissipations of watering-place life.

I was thoroughly wearied and beaten out with city life; and the July heat was terrible. Then, when not quite decided where to go for relief, I met a well-known master of the piscatory art, who said: "Go down to Seconnet and West Island, a dozen miles southeast of Newport. You will catch any quantity of health and sea-bass on the Island; and I have pulled in striped-bass there, ranging all the way up to the forties." So I obeyed and went to Newport by boat, thence by carriage around by the Head of Rhode Island, Mount Hope and the Stone Bridge, and down the main land to Seconnet Point.

The Seconnet House stood (perhaps it still stands; I have not seen it since that summer,) at only a hundred or two of yards from the rocky beach, at that extreme point of Little Rhody which almost joins Massachusetts and looks across the open Atlantic towards the entrance of Vineyard Sound. It had cheery piazzas, overlooking the sea, with a sufficient air of fashion and resort to warrant something better than the make-shift style of larder and cookery, and yet rural-looking and pleasantly home-like. Between it and the sea, the single field was a pleasant grassy lawn, with a few paths worn across it to the verge of the bluff; almost beside it ran the hard-beaten road leading away to what pretended to be the abodes of a higher civilization; behind it, at only a few rods' distance, commenced a belt of woods, stretching away to an unbroken forest and swamp, and offering as tempting walks in its outer portions, as it supplied of impassable thickets and detaining quagmires to the thorough explorer. Across the water, westward, only three or four hundred yards, rose West Island, high and rocky, crowned with the two or three houses which afforded shelter and supplied refreshment to parties of the ruder sex who came down to Seconnet for fishing *only*. It seemed that one could almost have stepped across such a little distance, where the water *must* be shallow; but keener eyes could detect the viciousness of the surf that broke white around the dangerous rocks, even in the calmest weather; and there were not wanting those who remembered upset boats and lost lives in crossing that diminutive reach.

The Seconnet House was not "full," in the profitable

significance of the word, but it contained quite enough inhabitants for comfort and enjoyment. A very considerable number of Providence people, a lesser representation from other Rhode Island towns and their suburbs, a score of Bostonians, half a score of New Yorkers and even a few from Philadelphia and the West—these made up a quite sufficient variety in age, sex, costume and character. Promenades at all hours; whortleberry-parties to the woods in the morning; bathing and fishing-parties to one point or another of the beach or to the Island; hops at night, to the music of the piano, a violin and a flute—these, with the inevitable amount of maternal watchfulness and match-arranging, of paternal comings and goings-away, of flirting and gayety among the young people, made up a very respectable field for observation, and, as I have already said, for enjoyment by any one not too exigent.

I have said that there were a few New Yorkers at the Seconnet. None of them chanced to be acquaintances of mine, and yet there were a few of whom I knew quite as much as if I had enjoyed that privilege.

Mrs. Wilmerding, wife of a well-known and wealthy merchant, attracted my attention within a few minutes after reaching the house. I do not say that I should have laid quite so much stress on the presence of the handsome but passé woman of forty-five, but for the fact that she was accompanied by her only and petted daughter Clara, whom I had known (without introduction or acquaintance) and loved (in the same way that we love children, statues and pictures), through at least two winters of opera and

street rencontre. Mr. Wilmerding, as I had no difficulty in understanding, had been unable to leave his important midsummer mercantile transactions so far behind him as Seconnet, whence he could not visit the city oftener than once or twice a week; and consequently his wife and daughter, who felt or fancied the need of that peculiar Rhode Island coast air, had been allowed to make their way East and to Seconnet without his accompanying.

When the mere remark is made that Clara Wilmerding was very handsome, nothing whatever has been said of her. What I should like to convey of her is that her beauty was of the most refined and fragile order, always seeming to bring up that singular but expressive phrase, the "wealthy curled darling." Whether that peculiar characteristic lay in her soft brown hair, in her softer brown eyes, in the transparency of her complexion, or in the rounded litheness of a form not often equalled—I cannot pretend to say; I only know that the next natural thought, after falling in love with her, was that of all the women in the world, this delicious little bit of human flesh and blood should be "taken care of," carefully housed and tended, wrapped up and fenced against every evil and misfortune, to the extreme of Shakspeare's idea that "the very winds of heaven should not be allowed to visit her too roughly."

"Ah well!" I had more than once said to myself, seeing the smiling and most amiable girlish beauty flashing light over an opera parquette, or meeting her cloaked and hooded in the hallway when some performance was over—"ah well, she will marry, some time, I suppose! But

what a pity of pities it would be if she should so marry as either to find unhappiness or meet misfortune! That delicate soul and that tender form of womanhood would be alike incapable of enduring either wrong or adversity."

Let me add that Clara Wilmerding seemed exceedingly well chaperoned, even without her father—her mother being one of those sternly-matronly women, capable of exercising the strongest spirit of command, even if they show an occasional deficiency in the more winning qualities. I should also add that (as I afterwards discovered) the Wilmerdings had been at Seconnet for something more than a week before I reached that place.

I saw Miss Clara on the piazza very soon after my arrival. It was early evening when I saw her again, and under circumstances which threw me into a profound fit of reflection.

The old country habit of boyhood sent me wandering, alone, out into Seconnet woods, to hear the birds sing their farewell song of the day, and catch the first damp perfume of the early evening. At all events, this I did on that first evening at the beach, after temporarily exhausting the attractions of the shore during the afternoon; and the result was that second glimpse of Miss Wilmerding.

I was slowly strolling back towards the hotel, through one of the bye-paths, which in their very sight suggested long promenades and confidential communications, the spot being far enough from the house to make it nearly sure that the ordinary average of visitors would not venture so far, when, silent myself, I caught the low murmur of voices near me, and the next moment caught a glimpse of

two figures passing along an intersecting bye-road, a little broader than the one I was traversing, which led down into the very deepest recesses of that part of the wood which the theatrical people would call "practicable."

It is surprising how much we sometimes see in an instant, just as at other times we stupidly gaze for a much longer period without recognizing what lies plainly before us. I had not, on that occasion, looked at the couple who passed without seeing me, more than sixty seconds, when I knew that they were in love with each other. There was that in the attitude of the lady, leaning (in the true sense of the word) on the arm of her attendant, in the upturned glance which I caught under the evening light, and the bending down of the other face above that countenance of girlish beauty—there was that which told the whole story in the most attractive manner, and that which could no more be doubted than it can be described.

It was not only the two attitudes attracting my attention; there was something more, quite as important, though entirely in connection with the effect already described. Not only was Clara Wilmerding evidently in love, but she was in love with—whom? A handsome young fellow enough, certainly, with his tall figure, well-cut and energetic stripling face, and air of understanding precisely what he intended to do and how it was to be done.

But then this person upon whose arm the daughter of the New York merchant was leaning so confidently was such a stripling! and then he was—Charles Hope.

In order fully to understand my surprise—and may I not add my dissatisfaction?—it is necessary that I should explain who *was* Charles Hope, and what I knew of him.

I knew nothing wrong or unfavorable of him—thank heaven for that! It was not the young fellow, but his circumstances, with which I was momentarily quarreling.

I had known his father, a man of moderate means, connected with an iron-manufacturing house at Providence, and whose death occurred about 1859. I had made occasional visits to the house of the elder Hope (Robert) during the later years of his life—one or two of them before he became a widower and his only boy a half-orphan, and at least two others after the death of Mrs. Hope, when the boy was approaching, but had not fully reached, manhood. I had melancholy reason to know, too, that, beyond high spirits and probable good qualities, young Charley had inherited nothing from his father, whose last days had been embittered by the failure of the house with which he was connected, and the duty which he recognized (and fulfilled) of giving up everything to those who had trusted him. There was one sister married to a man of moderate means, and so provided for to a certain extent; and here the near relatives of young Hope seemed to end.

Of the young man himself I had seen little since the death of his father. I knew of him as having entered a mercantile house in Boston, and bearing the reputation of being an energetic and industrious subordinate, liked by his employers, and with quite enough ability to rise, had there been any fortune or influence at his back. But

that fortune or that influence—where was either to be found? And how many years might rationally be expected to elapse before the son of the broken Providence iron-master could hope to find the means of placing himself in a position beyond that of a moderately-paid employe?

Was I wrong in looking upon the young fellow, that evening, with a sentiment of pain and disapproval? What was he, to be wooing (as so evidently he was) the daughter of the New York millionaire? Not that I had any doubt of his being morally and mentally a companion for her, or for any one of ninety-nine out of one hundred of the carefully sheltered young girls who flutter around the drives of the Central Park, in luxury corresponding to that of London Rotten Row, or the Paris Bois de Boulogne; but that the money question came at once to intensify that other doubt which had to do with the family affections.

If, as seemed almost certain, the two young people had been accidentally flung together, in some one of the many opportunities of American travel or watering-place encounter, and if, as seemed certain, they were really in love with each other, what was to be the end of it all? With some people in view, I should merely have said: "Oh, this is of little or no consequence!—they will drift apart before any danger comes of the acquaintance, just as they have drifted together!" But I remembered quite enough in the boy to be certain that he would be found less practical, and less *practicable*, than this assurance pre-supposed, even if the young lady should not chance to develope a corres-

ponding amount of unprofitable stubbornness. So I fell back upon the question : What was to be the end ?

Probably a couple of broken hearts, or at least one. Parental disapprobation, a thing of certainty. Unhappiness almost a foregone conclusion. Suffering not a very remote probability, with the limited capacities of the lover and the petted and pampered uselessness of the beautiful temptation.

What a long speculation I had gone through within a few minutes after seeing that young couple cross by the path !—a very long and profound speculation, its subject being the behavior and welfare of two others, neither of whom would have been very likely to thank me for the interest, had they seen me (as they did not) and possessed the power of looking into my mentality.

They went on, and passed out of sight; towards the Seconnet, no doubt. I plunged deeper into the woods, under the incitement of my new train of thought, and ended by stepping into a quagmire, rousing and being bitten by a whole colony of ambushed mosquitoes, and returning to the house so late that I found only the dilapidated remains of a supper. All which latter did not disprove, of course, that I, who could not take care of myself, was the fittest of mentors for others !

II.

WEST ISLAND AND HOPE'S ANCHOR.

NATURALLY, one of the earliest of my employments, that evening, after my return to the hotel and late experiment at supper, was to pay a visit to the little office, and examine the register. Suggestively enough, as I passed along the piazza, I saw one of the objects of my solicitude—Miss Wilmerding, to wit—sitting with her mother, and one or two other elderly people, looking bewitchingly handsome, but conversing with the gravity of forty, and appearing so daintily demure that probably any other single person in the house would have been suspected of a flirtation before *her*.

As I had more than half suspected, I found no such name as that of "Charles Hope" on the register of the Seconnet. It was evident, then, that he could not be staying at the house, as certainly the old trick of booking under an assumed name would have been too silly for a thought. It might be, then, that he was stopping at some one of the semi-private houses in the neighborhood, either because his funds were so limited that even the moderate expenditure at the Seconnet was thought unwise, or because the young fellow really had in him more of the elements of the intriguer than I had supposed, and preferred to obtrude himself as little as possible on the notice of Madame Mère, perhaps to escape altogether her knowledge of his being in the neighborhood. If the latter should be the case, the fact would only prove that

the trouble had begun, in the shape of family disapprobation and partial restraint; if the other, then the comment was not less forcible, on the prospect of marriage between that daughter of a wealthy family and a man who was even obliged to board at a cheaper house in order to be near her!

I think that I went to sleep, that night, in the little bed-room which they gave me, overlooking the rough coast and the moonlit water, and with the grand old song of the sea sounding pleasantly in my drowsy ears—I think that I went to sleep, I say, musing much more upon the two young people than was at all profitable for a man who certainly had quite enough subjects for anxiety of his own. And I am sure that I had scarcely more than fallen into my first sleep when I commenced dreaming of an elopement taking place from that very house, across the British Channel, with the two parties blending Charles Hope and myself, Miss Wilmerding, and some female relative of my own!

The morning, however, made the dream of the night nonsense, as well as part of the speculations of the day, and unexpectedly placed me in contact with that one of the subjects of my anxiety demanding the most of my attention.

The most prominent of objects from the piazza of the Seconnet was the rocky, high West Island, presenting the strongest of temptations, especially to one who had so lately been in conversation with the prince of fishermen. Was I not the least fortunate of sportsmen, with, consequently, the strongest of desires in that direction? And

had I not been assured by him that even stupidity could not prevent the catching of a certain number of three or five pounders from the top of those rocks?

The long and short of it is, that I wanted my fish, and was going after them, at once, on the first full day of my stay at Seconnet. The task of getting across to the Island was not a difficult one, especially to any person boasting of as much sea-coast experience as myself. Where there was a crossing, for which money required to be paid, little fear that some tarry old salt in a small way would not be found lounging about at the point of embarkation.

I went across the lawn to the rocky headland with the beach stretching below. I found the tarry old salt in readiness, sitting by the side of his boat, and professional enough in his get-up to have belonged to the navy or some great ocean mail service. I engaged him for the perilous voyage of four hundred yards (be the same more or less) to the Island, and for the return therefrom at a certain hour in the afternoon.

We were just about to shove off, with myself for single fare, when there came a cheery hail from the fence at the top of the bluff, and then a tall, light form sprang down over the rocks, and ran down to the boat, with

"Hold on, Joe! if you are going to the Island, suppose that you carry two instead of one!"

"Jest as this gentleman says—*he* has took the boat; but maybe he'd make room," responded the boatman, with less regard to grammar than to my temporary proprietorship of his craft.

"Make room? Certainly, why ——." I had not noticed the personality of the new comer until at that instant; and I need not say that I was gratified to discover the son of my old friend, and the absorbed lover of the evening before.

He recognized me with pleasure, after a moment, and we shook hands warmly. Then expressing our mutual additional pleasure at going to West Island in such company, we shoved off, and, in spite of what the old boatman declared the perils of the passage, were landed safely on that wildest of rocky islands, and best spot for sea-bass on the round globe, in a very few minutes of dexterous rowing.

I have neither occasion nor intention to detail the fishing experience of that day, farther than to say that for once in my life I had as many bites as I wished, and really caught so many dark-scaled fellows that my back ached with the very stooping to pick them up; Hope excelling me at the rate of about two to one, and some of the ladies from the Seconnet excelling all the males in at least the same proportion.


Besides the fishing, there was something very delicious in the day and the location. A brighter, breezier July day never dawned; there was only a modicum of discomfort in the occasional burst of rough merriment from small "stag parties" inhabiting the West Island House; and to sit on that rock, thirty or forty feet above the water, with a magnificent sea view, with the spray often dashing coolly to the top, and still fishing with ease, comfort, and success, was something out of the common order.

Then the conversation. But this reminds me that, in the conversation of that day, the only excuse lies for all this long story. Without "Hope's anchor" the whole affair would be the most melancholy of Hamlets, without any prince to speak of!

The "anchor" had no relation to the old fisherman's boat or its mooring; it was simply a breast-pin, or, as our transatlantic cousins more properly call it, a bosom-pin. I noticed it the moment after our first meeting, and admired the taste, while taking some exception to the size and pronounced character of the ornament. The shank was of chased silver, with flukes of some red stone, and the cross stock of gold, while fast to the ring at top was a tiny venetian chain of exquisite workmanship, which scarcely suggested bringing up a vessel with a "round turn" in the event of needing to anchor in heavy weather.

I have a foible of talking of nearly everything that I see, necessarily very often to the wrong person, or under circumstances making any conversation on the subject improper. Consequence, I could not avoid the impropriety of alluding to that special personal adornment.

It was when we had been some time on the Island, and when the sacred hunger for fish had begun to be somewhat dulled, that the desultory conversation ran into such a channel that I felt the necessity of interpolating the "anchor." I had previously learned from Hope that he had been something like a fortnight at Seconnet, boarding at the private residence of a distant relative, a quarter of a mile from the house; and ascertained, from



what I now recognize may have been indefensible "pumping," that he still retained his place in the Boston mercantile-house, with no change of any consequence in position.

"That is a somewhat remarkable breast-pin of yours," I said, when the necessity of gabbling grew too strong upon me for resistance.

"Eh? What, you do not like it?" he replied.

"Humph, well," I said, "that depends. One may like a thing, and even admire it, and yet not quite—I mean may have certain objections to it. Now, for instance, we have a certain official in New York who wears a diamond cross worth about three thousand dollars, and the clustered diamonds are very beautiful, and yet ——."

"Yet you would not wish to wear it?" he interrupted. "No; neither would I. Undoubtedly the first comfortable moment, to the owner of such a breast-pin, would be that when he first forgot that he owned it. But mine, you see, is so very different; it is not small enough to lose easily."

"That may be easily conceded," I assented.

"Then it is odd," he continued, "and has a certain charm from that fact, to *me* at least; and there are half a dozen reasons why I hope to wear it to the very day I die, and why I certainly shall wear it, if it does not become lost or stolen."

"Ah, yes; I recognize one," I said. "Your name is Hope, and Hope is understood to be in that particular line of the marine hardware business. May I suppose that you are wearing it as a promising coat of arms, as

some of the English families use similar cognizances?"

"Yes, partially so," he replied. "My name is Hope, and mythological Hope leans on an anchor. So why should not another Hope carry one? But that is the least of my reasons for wearing this particular pin. Don't you remember that I am a Rhode Islander, and that Little Rhody adopts that symbol? Do you wish any more?"

"As many as you like, seeing that you have such a stock of excuses on hand!" I half laughed.

"Humph! thank you for nothing!" he replied, with a voice as gay as my own; at that moment hauling in a seabass of prodigious size, and dropping his hook again mechanically. It was quite a moment before he spoke again, and when he did so there was no merriment whatever in his voice; it was almost painfully earnest, as was his whole manner.

"You will scarcely credit me, I suppose, Mr. T——," he said "when I tell you that I set the most superstitious value on that pin, and that no motive on earth would induce me to part with it. Not alone because my name is Hope and because I am a Rhode Islander, but because I have every reason to believe that it is my 'totem'—that it is in some mysterious way connected with the welfare of my life. Pray do not interrupt me, even if you think me very foolish," he continued, perhaps reading in my face symptoms of the suppressed *cacoethes loquendi*. "For I value your good opinion higher than you know, for the sake of the friendship once existing between my father and yourself; and you must really allow me to tell

you, without laughing at me more than is necessary, why I hold this fancy."

"Certainly, my dear young fellow!" I assented. "Go on, and depend upon my not laughing at all, even if I should take the privilege of wondering."

"First and foremost, then," he continued, "when I was quite a boy, and in your city, one day two ladies (relatives) took me with them to a fortune-teller. I do not believe in such people, and yet ——. Well, one of the sybils (there were two) half frightened me to death by going through some kind of incantation that I cannot describe, in which clouds of smoke and incense played a part, and out of which clouds came a dark, shadowy object; finally resolving itself into an anchor. The sorceress screamed when she saw it; said that she had not intended to bring it up, but that it related not to the lady whose fortune she was trying, but to *me*! I do not remember what else she said, as her language was half gibberish; but I do remember that the anchor I saw had the peculiar colors that I have tried to get imitated in this; and that I can no more shake off the impression that the symbol is connected with all my best interests, than I can cease breathing of my own will."

"All that is not quite so singular to me as it might be to many other persons," I remarked, when he paused for a moment. "I have seen and heard some things of the same character, quite as remarkable, and I am the last person to laugh at what I do not happen to understand, because if I did I should be laughing nearly all the time."

"I have had the omen tested once," he went on, after a glance at me, to see whether I was really speaking in earnest, which changed into an expression of absolute gratitude when he saw that I was really doing so. "Do you know that fearful reef of rocks, round near the mouth of the Vineyard Sound, that I believe they call 'Dead-mans?' No? Well, it is no matter. I was going in from Nantucket, in a little schooner, two years ago, at about this time, when a furious north-wester came on with almost the suddenness of a flash, blew away mainsail and jib, and left us nothing but the foresail. With the foresail alone we could not make any way, and we commenced to drift on that reef, where the schooner would have gone to pieces in about eight minutes, and the four of us would all have been drowned in ten. I never quite knew what the little implement was practically worth, of which I wear this faint resemblance in my shirt-front, until that hour, or rather *those hours*. For all night long we lay off those hungry rocks, ready to gnaw us up and swallow us at any moment. Safe, so long as that anchor held; lost, beyond hope, if it dragged or gave way. I suppose that all of us prayed, more or less, during that fearful night; but I have an idea that, if *I* prayed at all, it was to the *anchor*, to HOLD ON!

"The morning came at last; the gale abated; the sea went down a little; we set the fragment of an old jib on her, and with that and the foresail managed to clear the rocks, and get into the Sound. That is all, and I suppose there is little or nothing in the incident; but you can

imagine that my superstition, if that is the proper name for it, was strengthened instead of weakened by that experience."

I had been listening with great interest; carried away, in spite of myself, by the force of the speaker, who so evidently felt all that he uttered, and finding one more reason even than name, State, fortune-telling and experience, for the love which so deified the anchor.

"Charley," I said, at length, "I fancy that you cling to the anchor for another reason that you have not named—that you have hope (phrenologically speaking) very large, and somehow associate that emblem with your confident belief that you can do anything."

He turned round on me with a half-angry suddenness, which moderated down into surprise.

"How do you know that? You are right, however. It *is* partially on that account that I love and believe in 'Hope's anchor.' Yes, I *have* 'hope' very large. No one knows, as yet, how truly I believe in myself and my destiny—how certainly I can and will accomplish what I thoroughly intend!"

I thought that my time had come for probing him, at the same time that I made him aware of the extent of my knowledge in a certain direction.

"Your 'hope' and 'confidence,' I suppose, Charley, go so far as to lead you to believe that you can marry Clara Wilmerding, conquer her family and not reduce her to misery."

The young man's face was very angry, for just one instant. He turned upon me again, and this time almost fiercely.

"Mr. T——!" he exclaimed, roughly, "what do you know about my private affairs? What right have you ——"

I suppose that he remembered himself, for he paused; and then I added:

"I know nothing more than this, Charley Hope: that I was your father's friend, and should be sorry to see his son committing any act that would make himself and others unhappy."

His tone was less severe, as he asked:

"But what do you know of any connection of mine with Miss Wilmerding? I hope you will tell me that!"

"I will. I have known the young lady, by sight, for some time. And last evening, back in the woods, yonder, I saw you together, and saw that you were in love with each other."

"Humph!" he said, with a laugh that nettled me a little. "Now you fancy that you have spelled out a romance, Mr. T——, and excuse me if I spoil it! I am not going to deny that I am in love with Miss Wilmerding, nor the hope and belief that she loves me in return; but there is another part of the romance, which I see by your eyes that you suspect, and yet that has no truth whatever. I am *not* going to run away with her and marry her in defiance of her family; and I was *not* walking with her clandestinely, last evening."

I was a little nonplussed by this frank statement, which certainly destroyed the groundwork of more than half my speculations ; but if I lost something in one way I gained in another : I had more materials than before, for *wonder*.

"Her family know of the attachment, then ?" I asked, after a moment, as the only reply.

"They do."

"And approve of it?"

"No—I suppose not. At least I am satisfied that they would have preferred as a match for their daughter, some person with more means at command ; but I am proud to say that I believe they know and trust me, and that they are not likely to oppose our marriage, *when the time comes*."

"And when may that be?"

"That moment—no sooner and no later !" he answered with flashing eyes and a face of handsome pride, "*when I can marry her with a certainty of not depriving her of any comfort or luxury that she could otherwise reasonably expect to enjoy*. In other words—when I can 'take care of her,' as they call it, pretty nearly as she deserves."

"Humph ! think !" I said, "they are rich, you are poor. How many years of weary waiting may there not be before you see that happy day ! Are you sure that you will not grow tired of waiting ?—that you can indeed do all you purpose—so keep and protect her you love, as to leave no ground for self-reproach ?"

“Hush!” he said, almost sternly. “Don’t croak, please! It will do no good, and may do harm.” Then his face lit up with all its old boyish enthusiasm, as he added, pointing once more to the emblem: “See—this is ‘Hope’s anchor.’ I believe in it, and you shall see whether or not I fail! Promise me to say nothing of all this to any one; and also promise me that some day when I send you a note, you will come and see me—and *her*.”

I made both promises—what else could I do? And I kept both.

III.

HOW HOPE'S ANCHOR DID ITS DUTY.

How little we know of the mode in which any fulfillment is to come, of that for which we so ardently wish ! And how seldom a prayer, if answered, is so answered that we at once recognize the connection of the reply with the petition !

The time given me by Charley Hope for his marriage with Clara Wilmerding had been : " When he could marry her without depriving her of any comfort or luxury." And yet how little he could have looked forward, at the moment of speaking, to the true (and, alas, the sad) influences which should bring that opportunity !

The civil war had not long broken out at the time of the meeting at Seconnet. It grew—spread—widened—did its work of good, and wrought its work of ruin. It crippled the resources of the Boston house with which the young man stood connected, and held him back from opportunities of rising that his energy would otherwise have undoubtedly embraced if it did not create. It kept him rising slowly—oh, so slowly, that my prophecy might have been fulfilled in gray hairs if not in discouragement. When, oh when could the struggling young fellow hope to become the mate of the merchant's daughter ?

Then it did another thing—yet more sad and more cruel. It broke the heart and the fortunes of James

Wilmerding, at very nearly the same blow ; leaving his wife a widow, straightened if not in absolute poverty, and his daughter no longer the "wealthy curled darling" in fortune, if she yet retained the physical grace and fragility indicated by the name.

It was a year after the death of her father, when Charley Hope's determination at once overcame any remaining objections on the part of her still-proud and naturally-anxious mother, and shrinking timidity on the part of the young girl herself. They were married—unwisely, as I could not but believe—at the house of a relative of Clara, in Boston ; and so one part of the destiny was accomplished.

I have said that I feared. True, the young man had kept the letter of his word, not marrying in such a way as to reduce his bride in comfort actually possessed ; but had he not broken it in spirit ? Should he not have waited until some assurance had been gained against absolute poverty ? Was there not danger, still, of his doing the very thing which I had feared from the beginning—exposing that sweetest and most delicate of human flowers to some nipping frost from which no mortal hand could defend her ?

I am not sure but those fears grew stronger instead of weakening, when, in the June of the following year, I responded to the third invitation which had been given me, and went to see the young birds in their little nest, a cottage at the eastern end of Chelsea, towards Lynn. What should I see, when I reached the place—spite of the hopeful tone which pervaded the invitations ? Would

I not find the young husband worried and anxious, in spite of the confidence of his nature? Would he not manifest some token that the load of care was too heavy, as conjoined with the other and ordinary load of labor? And (of quite as much consequence) would I not find the sweet face of Clara already beginning to wear a pinched and querulous expression, in the wearing away of the gilding of "love in a cottage" and the approach of those realities connected with the vulgar want of accustomed luxuries?

What I did find was this. A very pleasant little cottage, flower-climbed, backed by a pretty garden, and fronted by the near shore, Boston Bay, and a fine view of Nahant. A complete little equipment, with one servant. A husband toiling manfully, but bearing no mark in face or manner, that the toil was beyond him, or that any undue anxiety troubled his nightly rest or made his waking hours weary. A charming young wife, even prettier in the neat dress in which she managed her limited household, than she had been when sweeping over the Drive or fluttering at the Opera,—and evidently as happy as love and congeniality can make a true American girl.

Fears and anxieties!—why, I flung them to the winds, that evening, after tea, when pretty Clara was superintending the disposal of the china, and when Charley and I sat on the little porch and blew clouds of tobacco-smoke amid the hanging flowers. What were fears and anxieties here—where so evidently both the partners were fitted for the engagement into which they had entered,

and where happiness made its home if there was such a home on earth !

“ You see there is no discount on ‘ Hope’s anchor,’ Mr. T——,” said Charley, when I had expressed some of my felicitations. “ It is here, odd as ever,” pointing to the emblem, “ and if I do not miss a figure, I have already proved that I can be a mate for a rich man’s daughter, and console her for the loss of some material things that a part of her sex consider indispensable.”

“ And the future—what are your prospects for the future—business ones, I mean, Charley ?” I could not avoid asking.

“ Slow but sure, as the anchor would be, I suppose, if it took a fancy to locomote !” was the reply. “ I am funding a little, constantly, and so have something for a rainy day. It may need two or three years, yet, before I get into the firm ; but that I will do, as sure as my name and nature are Hope !—as surely as I did what I promised you that I would do, on West Island—as surely as I have already proved that I can ‘ take care ’ of my darling.”

* * * * *

I received a telegram from a friend at Boston, on the 17th day of December, 1869. I pen the transcription with horror—something like that which moved me when I first read it and tried to master that sense which seemed so painfully incredible.

J. T., Jr., ——— St., New York.

Charles Hope killed by accident, this morning.
Please come on at once. Mrs. Hope wishes it.

A. L. R.

I have seldom tried to think, with such difficulty as I found, that night, on the boat, on the way to answer that melancholy summons. It could not be that the bright young fellow whom I had so well known and—yes, let the word be used—loved ; it could not be that he, with all his high hopes and all his surroundings of happiness, was dead ! It could not be that the young wife and mother, so lately a thing to be almost envied, was now a thing to be pitied with the deepest pity that could emanate from the human heart !

And beyond this first question of the laceration of the affections, what lay ? It was dreadful to be obliged to think of it, at such a moment, but the thought could not be dismissed. What was to become, now, of the comparatively helpless woman, no longer with only herself to care for, but the mother and only protectress of a little daughter of less than two years ? The hand that had been so bold and determined, for *her*—the hand of the bread-winner—lay cold, and nothing more of support could flow into it or from it. With so little time elapsed, and not even yet admitted into the firm which had been his confident expectation, it was not possible, at the best, that the young husband could have left behind him anything of consequence—a few hundreds, perhaps, beyond the furniture and appointments of the little house at Chelsea—at most a thousand or two. And what would that be, as affording any dependance to the helpless widow ? Even to win bread for herself and child—if, as I believed, her family could neither offer nor she receive—it would be necessary for the petted daughter and the

tenderly-cared-for wife and mother, to descend to some wearying occupation little less than menial—the miserable dependence of music-teaching, perhaps, or—God help her!—the ill-paid and endless click of the sewing-machine.

“Oh, Charley Hope!—poor Charley Hope!” I mentally cried—“you have been like half the men of your day and generation; you have *not* kept the woman you loved from penury and suffering, even though you have done your best in your blind and self-confident way. Where is your ‘anchor,’ now, poor, poor Charley?—and where is theirs, who leaned on you?”

I reached Boston and Chelsea. The poor young fellow, killed on the previous morning by a box slipping from the hooks, at one of the wharves that he was visiting on some errand connected with the house—lay already coffined; still handsome and defiant-looking, though disfigured by the accident. The poor wife, distracted and heart-broken, was in an upper room, attended by some sympathizing friends, and almost beyond the present power of realizing her situation.

I am obliged to draw a curtain over the scenes that followed. God keep us all from witnessing the like, and make us truly grateful when we escape! We buried my dead friend at Mount Auburn, on the second day after my arrival; and it was not until then that there was either heart or opportunity to talk of that worldly subject, his affairs.

It was by poor widowed Clara Hope herself that a package was put into my hands, bearing my name, and

endorsed: "To be handed to Mr. J. T., Jr., if possible, in the event of my death—no matter at what date.

C. H."

I opened, laid aside the accompanying papers, and read what perhaps surprised me as much as any document that had ever fallen into my hands, during a somewhat long life in which things out of the common have been no rarity.

CHELSEA, March 10th, 1869.

Dear Mr. J. T. ———, Jr. :

You were my father's friend, and circumstances which I hope that you will never regret have made you more *my* friend and confident than I should ever have presumed to ask you to become. But trusting that you have never regretted anything done for me, I am about to lay a burden upon you, which I am sure that you will accept, as the very fact of your receiving and reading this will prove that the order of nature has been reversed and that I am dead. I have no idea, at the time of penning these lines, whether you will read them during this very year [poor fellow!—I did! J. T., Jr.], ten years hence, twenty years, or never. But if you do live to read them, I hope and trust that you will respond to my wishes.

Accompanying please find a will—very brief, because I have few to whom I should care to bequeath anything, if I had never so much. You and my dear wife are named executors, with power to choose a third in case of necessity. I shall alter the document, occasionally, perhaps; but you will find it very nearly as I intend it to be at my latest moment of consciousness and oppor-

tunity. Please act as requested, and supplement the kindness by being what you can of friend and adviser to my wife and any children that I may leave.

There is another matter, of quite as much consequence. I have been aware, ever since my marriage, of the propriety of insuring my life, so as to make sure what I promised you on West Island, years ago, and prevent the possibility of my dear ones falling into penury. Before I die, it may chance that I have fulfilled all my expectations and accumulated a competence; if it happens otherwise, this will secure their temporary welfare, as nothing else could do, and without any reference to the time that may have elapsed.

It was only last week that I found time to complete what I should have completed before. One of the other papers in this package you will find to be a policy for ten thousand dollars, on my life, in the Anchor Life Insurance Company, New York. I almost fancy that I hear you laugh, even over my dead body, at the way in which "Hope's Anchor" comes up again in the name of the Company I have chosen; and I do not deny that I think very much of the omen—that I would rather trust a company so named, than any other. The "Anchor" has been very good, for me, so far, and the old fortune-teller seems to have been right.

But that you may not laugh too long or too loudly over my fancy in choice, let me say that I have had other reasons in choosing this Company—though by the time you read this, I hope that my confidence will have been long justified by its success and fairness. In the first

place, I know some of its managers personally, through business relations with the house with which I am connected, and they strike me as thoroughly reliable. Then the general plans and special features of the Company seem to appeal to every sensible mind, as affording an admirable balance between the Company and its policy-holders, as you will see from one of the pages of their prospectus, which I cut out and fasten here, to show you, some day or other (may it be many a long year first!) what were its leading characteristics in 1869.

1st.—Its Rates are the LOWEST of any Mutual Company in America.

2d.—It affords absolute security.

3d.—All its Policies are Non-Forfeitable.

4th.—It GUARANTEES A CASH SURRENDER VALUE of all Policies.

5th.—It Loans the Surrender-value of its Policies.

6th.—It does not Limit Travel as other Companies do.

7th.—It allows 30 days' grace in Payment of Premium.

8th.—It declares Dividends Annually, and its DIVIDENDS ARE NON-FORFEITING, and are used in continuing the Insurance, or paid in Cash in a paid-up Policy.

9th.—Its Charter affords the fullest Legal Security to Married Women and their Children.

And now I have troubled you long enough ; but I have less hesitation in doing so, because if this ever speaks to you, it will be then the voice of one from the dead. Once more commending to you, in such a case, my wife and little ones (be the latter many or few) I remain,

Truly and gratefully yours,

CHARLES HOPE.

It was, indeed, "the voice of one from the dead,"—speaking how much sooner than the poor fellow could have anticipated. But the tale it told was a pleasant one—its presence or its absence marking the difference between the widow simply though sadly bereaved, and yet in comfort—and the same widow literally penniless and almost lacking time from her miserable bread-grinding avocations, even for grief.

Charley Hope had been wiser than I dreamed, even if more unfortunate than either of us could have supposed in advance. He *had* done all he promised on West Island, proving himself a fit mate for the tenderly-nurtured girl, laying solid plans for a future of undoubted prosperity, and crowning all by such wise action, during life and health, as enabled him to stretch out his arm even from the grave and protect those he loved!

"Hope's Anchor"—that breast-pin—lies before me as I write; given me, as a keepsake, not many weeks ago, by the comfortably-circumstanced though sorrowing Clara, who fully knows the relation between her dead husband and myself, and who is kind enough to say that to her husband, herself and her little one, I have fulfilled the part of a true friend.







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